

PHC Chapter 19: Ear, nose and throat conditions

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19.1 ALLERGIC RHINITIS

J30.0-4

DESCRIPTION

Inflammation of the mucous membranes of the nose and paranasal sinuses in response to an allergen e.g. pollen, house dust, grasses, and animal hair.

Allergic rhinitis is characterised by recurrent episodes of:

- » blocked stuffy nose
- » watery nasal discharge
- » frequent sneezing, often accompanied by nasal itching and irritation
- » conjunctival itching and watering
- » oedematous pale nasal mucosa
- » mouth breathing
- » snoring at night

Exclude other causes, such as infections, vasomotor rhinitis, overuse of decongestant drops, and side effects of antihypertensives and antidepressants.

GENERAL MEASURES

Avoid allergens and irritants.

MEDICINE TREATMENT

Adults and children > 6 years of age

- Corticosteroid, e.g.: LoE:III¹
- Fluticasone, aqueous nasal solution, 1 spray of 100 mcg in each nostril 12 hourly.
 - Aim the nozzle laterally and upwards (aim for the eye) and not to the back of the throat.
 - Do not sniff vigorously. LoE:I²
 - Review 3 monthly.

Note: Fluticasone and budesonide interacts with protease inhibitors. Refer all patients on protease inhibitors requiring corticosteroids for further management. LoE:III³

For short term symptomatic use:

Children

- Chlorphenamine, oral, 0.1 mg/kg/dose 6–8 hourly. See dosing table: Appendix IV.

Adults

- Chlorphenamine, oral, 4 mg, 6–8 hourly.

For relief of nocturnal nasal blockage:

Topical nasal decongestant e.g.:

- Oxymetazoline 0.05%, intranasal, administered at night for a maximum of 5 days.
- Long-term antihistamines should only be used after an adequate trial of intranasal corticosteroids and should be added to steroid therapy, if necessary.

For long-term use in adults and school going children:

Children: 2–6 years of age

- Cetirizine, oral, 5 mg once daily. See dosing table: Appendix IV.

Children > 6 years of age and adults

- Non-sedating antihistamine, oral e.g.:
- Cetirizine, oral, 10 mg daily.

LoE:I⁴**REFERRAL**

- » Chronic persistent symptoms.
- » Severe symptoms.
- » Patients on protease inhibitors, requiring nasal corticosteroids.

19.2 COMMON COLD (VIRAL RHINITIS)

J00

DESCRIPTION

Colds are self-limiting viral conditions that may last up to 14 days. Colds begin to clear within 3 days. Colds present with nasal stuffiness and throat irritation.

Malnourished children, the elderly and debilitated patients are at greater risk of developing complications.

Complications

Secondary bacterial infections, including:

- » pneumonia
- » otitis media
- » sinusitis

GENERAL MEASURES

- » Limit strenuous activity.
- » Ensure adequate hydration.
- » Advise patient to return to clinic if earache, tenderness or pain over sinuses develops or symptoms persist for > 14 days.

MEDICINE TREATMENT

Antibiotics are of no value for the treatment of the common cold.

Infants

- Sodium chloride 0.9%, 1–3 drops, instilled into each nostril as required.

LoE:III⁵**Symptomatic relief of pain and fever with discomfort:**Children

- Paracetamol, oral, 10–15 mg/kg/dose 6 hourly when required. See dosing table: Appendix IV.

LoE:III⁶**REFERRAL**

Severe complications.

19.3 EPISTAXIS

See Section 21.2.7: Nose bleeds (epistaxis).

19.4 OTITIS

19.4.1 OTITIS EXTERNA

H60.0/H60.5/H60.9

DESCRIPTION

Inflammation of the external ear may be one of the following:

- » Diffuse: An infection of the ear canal, often due to Gram negative bacilli (especially *P. aeruginosa*). Pain is increased when chewing and the lining of the canal may be either inflamed or swollen with dry or moist debris or even a white or clear discharge.
- » Furuncular: Usually caused by *Staphylococcus aureus*. A painful localised swelling present at the entrance to the ear canal. May be precipitated by trauma caused by scratching, e.g. matchsticks, earbuds.

GENERAL MEASURES

- » Exclude any underlying suppurative otitis media. If suppurative otitis media is diagnosed, see Section: 19.4.3 Otitis media, chronic, suppurative.
- » Most cases recover after thorough cleansing and drying of the ear.
- » Keep the ear clean and dry (dry mopping).
- » Do not leave pieces of cotton wool, etc. in the ear.
- » Do not instil anything into the ear unless prescribed.

MEDICINE TREATMENT

Diffuse

- » Does not usually require an antibiotic
- » Make a wick where possible, using ribbon gauze or other suitable absorbent cloth, e.g. paper towel to clean and dry the ear.
- Acetic acid 2% in alcohol, topical, instilled into the ear every 6 hours for 5 days.
 - Instil 3–4 drops after cleaning and drying the ear.

Furuncular

Children

- Cefalexin, oral, 25 mg/kg/dose 12 hourly for 5 days ^A. See dosing table: Appendix IV.

OR

- Flucloxacillin, oral, 12–25 mg/kg/dose 6 hourly for 5 days. See dosing table: Appendix IV.

Children > 7 years of age and adults

- Cefalexin, oral, 500 mg 6 hourly for 5 days ^A.

OR

- Flucloxacillin, oral, 500 mg 6 hourly for 5 days ^A.

Severe penicillin allergy:

Z88.0

Children

- Macrolide, e.g.:

- Azithromycin, oral, 10 mg/kg daily for 3 days ^W. See dosing table: Appendix IV.

Children > 35 kg and adults

- Macrolide, e.g.:
- Azithromycin, oral, 500 mg daily for 3 days.

REFERRAL

No response to treatment.

19.4.2 OTITIS MEDIA, ACUTE

H66.9

DESCRIPTION

Inflammation of the middle ear characterised by:

- » pain » drum perforation
- » loss of hearing » fever in about half of the cases
- » red bulging eardrum » loss of the normal light reflex of the eardrum

Mild redness of the eardrum and rubbing the ear are not reliable signs.

GENERAL MEASURES

- » Do not instil anything into the ear.
- » Avoid getting the inside of the ear wet.
- » Dry mop ear if discharge is present.
- » Do not plug the ear with cotton wool, etc.
- » Exclude HIV infection as a contributing factor for recurrent ear infection.

MEDICINE TREATMENTChildren

- Amoxicillin, oral, 45 mg/kg/dose 12 hourly for 5 days.

Weight kg	Dose mg	Use one of the following:				Age Months/years
		Syrup mg/ 5mL		Capsule mg		
		125	250	250	500	
>3.5–5 kg	175 mg	7 mL	3.5 mL	–	–	>1–3 months
>5–7 kg	250 mg	10 mL	5 mL	–	–	>3–6 months
>7–11 kg	375 mg	15 mL	7.5 mL	–	–	>6–18 months
>11–14 kg	500 mg	–	10 mL	2	1	>18 months–3 years
>14–17.5 kg	750 mg	–	15 mL	3	–	>3–5 years
>17.5–25 kg	1000 mg	–	20 mL*	4	2	>5–7 years
>25–30 kg	1250 mg	–	25 mL*	5	–	>7–10 years
>30 kg	1500 mg	–	–	6	3	>10 years

- Review response after 5 days.
- If pain or discharge persists, consider alternative diagnosis and continue antibiotics for a further 5 days.

LoE:III⁷

LoE:III⁸

Adults

- Amoxicillin, oral, 1500 mg 12 hourly for 5 days ^A.

LoE:III⁹

Antibiotic treatment for those who have taken amoxicillin in the previous 30 days; or poor response to 10-day course of amoxicillin:Children

- Amoxicillin/clavulanic acid oral, 45 mg/kg/dose of amoxicillin component, 12 hourly (amoxicillin/clavulanic acid in a ratio of 14:1) for 5-10 days. **A**
 - Maximum dose of amoxicillin component: 1.5 g 12 hourly. See dosing table: Appendix IV.

LoE:III¹⁰Children > 35 kg and adults

Amoxicillin/clavulanic acid, oral, 875/125 mg 12 hourly for 5 to 10 days **A**.

Severe penicillin allergy:

Z88.0

Children**LoE:III¹¹**

- Macrolide, e.g.:

- Azithromycin, oral, 10 mg/kg daily for 3 days **W**. See dosing table: Appendix IV.

Children > 35 kg and adults

- Macrolide, e.g.:

- Azithromycin, oral, 500 mg daily for 3 days **W**.

Pain:Children

- Paracetamol, oral, 10–15 mg/kg/dose 6 hourly when required. See dosing table: Appendix IV.

LoE:II¹²Adults

- Paracetamol, oral, 500 mg to 1 g, 4 to 6 hourly as required (to a maximum of 4 g in 24 hours).
 - Maximum dose: 15 mg/kg/dose.

For patients with upper respiratory tract congestion, secondary to allergy: (T78.4)

- Non-sedating antihistamine, oral, e.g.:
- Cetirizine, oral, 10 mg daily for 10 days.

LoE:II¹³

For management of allergic rhinitis, see section 19.1: Allergic rhinitis.

REFERRAL

- » Severe pain, fever or vomiting, not responding to treatment after 72 hours (if otoscopy confirmed) or after 24 hours (if otoscopy unconfirmed).
- » Recurrent otitis media.
- » Painful swelling behind the ear or tenderness on percussion of the mastoid.
- » Suspected meningitis.

19.4.3 OTITIS MEDIA, CHRONIC, SUPPURATIVE

H66.1-3

DESCRIPTION

A purulent discharge from the ear with perforation for > 2 weeks. If the eardrum has been ruptured for ≥ 2 weeks, a secondary infection with multiple organisms usually occurs. Oral antibiotic treatment is generally ineffective.

TB may present with a chronically discharging ear. Consider the diagnosis of TB if other clinical features suggestive of TB are present (e.g. cough, weight loss, failure to thrive, etc.). See Section 17.4: Pulmonary tuberculosis (TB).

LoE:III¹⁴**GENERAL MEASURES**

- » Do not send pus swabs collected from the external ear canal for routine bacterial and fungal MC+S (microscopy, culture and sensitivity) or for microscopy and culture for tuberculosis.
- » Explain to patients and caregivers that a chronically draining ear can only heal if it is dry.
- » Dry mopping is the most important part of the treatment. It should be demonstrated to the child's caregiver or patient if old enough. Roll a piece of clean absorbent cloth into a wick.
 - Carefully insert the wick into the ear with twisting action.
 - Remove the wick and replace with a clean dry wick.
 - Repeat this until the wick is dry when removed.
- » Do not leave anything in the ear.
- » Do not instil anything else in the ear.
- » Avoid getting the inside of the ear wet while swimming and bathing.
- » Check HIV status if unknown.

REFERRAL

- » All sick children, vomiting, drowsy, etc.
- » Painful swelling behind the ear.
- » Ear discharge still present for ≥ 4 weeks, despite dry mopping.

Note: These referrals do not all require referral to an ENT. They may be referred to a hospital outpatient department for consideration of a topical antibiotic eardrops.
- » Any attic perforation.
- » Any perforation not progressively improving after 3 months or closed by 6 months, even if dry.
- » Moderate or severe hearing loss.

19.5 SINUSITIS, ACUTE, BACTERIAL

J01.0-4/J01.8-9

DESCRIPTION

Bacterial infection of one or more paranasal sinuses that occurs most often after a viral nasal infection or allergic rhinitis.

Bacterial sinusitis is characterised by:

- » Deterioration of a common cold after 5–7 days.
- » Headache.
- » Purulent nasal discharge, especially if unilateral.
- » Pain and tenderness over one or more sinuses.
- » Nasal obstruction.
- » Fever.

Note: Sinusitis is uncommon in children < 5 years of age, as sinuses are not fully developed.

GENERAL MEASURES

Consider HIV in recurrent sinusitis.

MEDICINE TREATMENT

Children ≤ 3 years of age

- Amoxicillin, oral, 45 mg/kg/dose 12 hourly for 5 days.

Weight kg	Dose mg	Use one of the following:				Age Months/years
		Syrup mg/ 5mL		Capsule mg		
		125	250	250	500	
>2–2.5 kg	100	4 mL	2 mL	–	–	34–36 weeks
>2.5–3.5 kg	125	5 mL	2.5 mL	–	–	Birth–1 month
>3.5–5 kg	175	7 mL	3.5 mL	–	–	>1–3 months
>5–7 kg	250	10 mL	5 mL	–	–	>3–6 months
>7–11 kg	375	15 mL	7.5 mL	–	–	>6–18 months
>11–14 kg	500	–	10 mL	2	1	>18 months–3 years

Children > 3 years of age

- Amoxicillin, oral, 500 mg 8 hourly for 5 days .

Adults

- Amoxicillin, oral, 500 mg 8 hourly for 5 days .

Severe penicillin allergy:

Z88.0

Children

- Macrolide, e.g.:

- Azithromycin, oral, 10 mg/kg daily for 3 days . See dosing table: Appendix IV.

Children > 35 kg and adults

- Macrolide, e.g.:

- Azithromycin, oral, 500 mg daily for 3 days .

AND

- Oxymetazoline, nose drops, 2 drops in each nostril 6–8 hourly for not more than 5 days continuously.
 - Children > 5 years of age: 0.025%
 - Adults: 0.05%

LoE:III ¹⁵

AND/OR

- Sodium chloride 0.9%, nose drops, use frequently and in fairly large volumes.

Pain:Children

- Paracetamol, oral, 10–15 mg/kg/dose 6 hourly when required. See dosing table: Appendix IV.

Adults

- Paracetamol, oral, 500 mg to 1 g, 4 to 6 hourly as required (to a maximum of 4 g in 24 hours).
 - Maximum dose: 15 mg/kg/dose.

REFERRAL

- » Fever lasting > 48 hours.
- » Poor response > 5 days.
- » Complications, e.g. periorbital cellulitis with periorbital swelling.
- » Oedema over a sinus.
- » Recurrent sinusitis.
- » Meningeal irritation.

19.6 TONSILLITIS AND PHARYNGITIS

J03.0/J03.8-9/J35.0/J02.0/J02.8-9/J31.1-2

DESCRIPTION

A painful red throat and/or enlarged inflamed tonsils. White pus exudates, either spots or patches, may be present. Tender anterior cervical lymphadenopathy may be present. Viruses cause the majority of cases. Group A beta haemolytic streptococcus causes 20% of pharyngitis/tonsillitis, and may result in rheumatic fever (which can cause serious heart disease) as well as local suppurative complications.

Other clinical features that might suggest streptococcal infection may include palatal petechiae, inflamed tongue mucosal papillae (strawberry tongue), a scarlatiniform (i.e.: rough, diffuse, fine papular) rash.

GENERAL MEASURES

- » Homemade salt mouthwash, gargle for 1 minute twice daily:
 - 2.5 mL (½ medicine measure) of table salt in 200 mL lukewarm water.
 - Do not give to children unable to gargle.
- » Advise adequate hydration.
- » Avoid irritants e.g. vaporubs inserted into nostrils.
- » For children < 6 years of age: Soothe the throat with, breastmilk. If not exclusively breastfed, give warm water or weak tea: add sugar or honey and lemon if available.

MEDICINE TREATMENT

Antibiotics are not required for all patients with a sore throat.

Antibiotics to eradicate streptococci must be given to patients presenting with a sore throat who are at risk for rheumatic fever (3–21 years of age) if they have:

» Enlarged tonsils;

PLUS at least one of the following criteria:

- Exudates on their tonsils
- No cough
- No runny nose

LoE:I¹⁶

- Benzathine benzylpenicillin, IM, single dose.
 - Children < 30 kg: 600 000 IU.
 - Children ≥ 30 kg and adults: 1.2 MU.
 - Dissolve benzathine benzylpenicillin 1.2 MU in 3.2 mL lidocaine 1% without adrenaline (epinephrine) or 3 mL water for injection.

OR

Children

- Amoxicillin, oral, 50 mg/kg daily for 10 days.

Use one of the following							Age Months/years
Weight kg	Dose mg	Susp		Capsule			
		125 mg/5mL	250 mg/5mL	250 mg	500 mg		
>2–2.5 kg	100 mg	4 mL	2 mL	–	–	>34–36 weeks	
>2.5–3.5 kg	150 mg	6 mL	3 mL	–	–	>36 weeks–1 month	
>3.5–5 kg	200 mg	8 mL	4 mL	–	–	>1–3 months	
>5–7 kg	275 mg	11 mL	5.5 mL	–	–	>3–6 months	
>7–11 kg	400 mg	–	8 mL	–	–	>6–18 months	
>11–17.5 kg	575 mg	–	11.5 mL	–	–	>18 months–5 years	
>17.5–25 kg	750 mg	–	15 mL	3	–	>5–7 years	
>25–35 kg	1000 mg	–	20 mL	4	2	>7–11 years	
>35kg	2000 mg	–	–	–	4	>11 years	

LoE:I¹⁷

Adults

- Amoxicillin, oral, 1 000 mg 12 hourly for 10 days **A**.

LoE:III¹⁸

OR

Children: 18 months–11 years of age

- Phenoxymethylpenicillin, oral, 250 mg 12 hourly for 10 days **A**.

Children > 11 years of age and adults

- Phenoxymethylpenicillin, oral, 500 mg 12 hourly for 10 days **A**.

Severe Penicillin allergy:

Z88.0

Children > 3 years of age

- Macrolide, e.g.:

- Azithromycin, oral, 10 mg/kg daily for 3 days . See dosing table: Appendix IV.

Children > 35 kg and adults

- Macrolide, e.g.:

- Azithromycin, oral, 500 mg daily for 3 days .

Pain:Children

- Paracetamol, oral, 10–15 mg/kg/dose 6 hourly when required. See dosing table: Appendix IV.

Adults

- Paracetamol, oral, 500 mg to 1 g, 4 to 6 hourly as required (to a maximum of 4 g in 24 hours).
 - Maximum dose: 15 mg/kg/dose.

REFERRAL

- » Any suppurative complications, e.g. retropharyngeal or peritonsillar abscess.
- » Tonsillitis accompanied by difficulty in opening the mouth (trismus).
- » Recurrent tonsillitis (≥ 6 documented episodes/year) for possible tonsillectomy.
- » Suspected acute rheumatic fever.
- » Suspected acute glomerulonephritis.
- » Heart murmurs not previously diagnosed.

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**SOUTH AFRICAN NATIONAL DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
NEMLC SUMMARY REPORT ON UPDATES MADE TO THE
THE STANDARD TREATMENT GUIDELINES AND ESSENTIAL MEDICINE LIST GUIDANCE
PRODUCTS**

PHC CHAPTER 19: EAR, NOSE AND THROAT CONDITIONS

Document Version

Report Version	Date	Detail
V1.0	30 July 2026	Amoxicillin/clavulanic acid dose amended

Specific guidance products (Tick relevant and specify chapter number)

No	Guidance Product	Tick	Number
1.	Primary Health Care Level STGs	✓	19

Medicine Amendments

STG/SECTION	GUIDANCE PRODUCTS (Tick relevant)				MEDICINE / MANAGEMENT	ADDED / DELETED / AMENDED	TI* CONSIDERATIONS (if applicable)
	PHC STGs & EML	AH STG & EML	PaedH STG & EML	TQ EML			
Report Version v1.0							
19.4.2 Otitis Media, Acute	✓				Amoxicillin/clavulanic acid oral suspension	AMENDED	

*Therapeutic Interchange

19.4.2 Otitis Media, Acute

Update and Rationale

It is recommended that the amoxicillin/clavulanic acid oral suspension dosing, frequency and product ratio be aligned across indications in both the Primary Healthcare (PHC) and Paediatric Hospital Level (PaedHL) STGs and EML.

The update would be to amended amoxicillin/clavulanic acid dosing in children to:

- approximately 45 mg/kg/dose twice daily with weight band dosing;
- using the 14:1 ratio (600/42.9 mg/5 ml) oral solution.

Specialist ID Paediatricians are unaware of twice daily amoxicillin/clavulanic acid dosing studied (PK/PD/clinical comparisons with more frequent dosing) outside acute otitis media (persistent/recurrent). Amoxicillin has a short half-life of 1-1.3 hours, however the higher dose of in combination with clavulanate may mitigate in favour of the now 12 hourly dosing regimen as far as Gram-negative & anaerobic infections are concerned. *Also noting that increased concentrations of antibiotics are often achieved in the urinary tract which is an advantage (assuming*

the pathogens (usually Gram-negatives) causing a UTI are susceptible which is quite often not the case and calls into question the use of co-amoxiclav as first-line empiric treatment of UTIs in children as compared to adults).

The higher 90 mg/kg/day dose of amoxicillin component of the combination overcomes potential or confirmed low level penicillin-resistant pneumococcal infections.

The 14:1 ratio formulation avoids overdosing of clavulanic acid (>10 mg/kg/day) which is thought to be the driver of clavulanate dose-dependent diarrhoea with amoxicillin/clavulanic acid when trying to achieve the higher doses using using lower ratio combinations of amoxicillin/clavulanic acid.

It has been reported that Red Cross Children's Hospital has implemented this standardised dosing strategy for amoxicillin/clavulanic acid oral suspension and have reported that it has simplified pharmacy ordering and storage, and resulted in less prescriber errors.

Weight based dosing table

The NEMLC approved weight-based dosing table (included in the PaedHL STGs and EML) will be retained for dosing guidance:

Amoxicillin/Clavulanic Acid (14:1 Ratio) 600mg/42.9mg/5 ml					
Amoxicillin/clavulanic acid, oral, 45 mg/kg/dose of amoxicillin component, 12 hourly.					
Weight kg	Dose (amoxicillin component) mg	600mg/42.9/5ml Solution (14:1)	875mg/125mg Capsule	Age	
>2–2.5 kg	96 mg	0.8 mL	–	>34–36 weeks	
>2.5–3.5 kg	120 mg	1 mL	–	>36 weeks–1 month	
>3.5–5 kg	180 mg	1.5 mL	–	>1–3 months	
>5–7 kg	240 mg	2 mL	–	>3–6 months	
>7–11 kg	360 mg	3 mL	–	>6–18 months	
>11–14 kg	480 mg	4 mL	–	>18 months–3 years	
>14–17.5 kg	720 mg	6 mL	1	>3–5 years	
>17.5–25 kg	900 mg	7.5 mL	1	>5–7 years	
>25	1200 mg	10 mL	1	>7 years	

- Amoxicillin/clavulanic acid recommendation for children:** Dose, frequency and formulation amended.

The text was amended as follows:

Antibiotic treatment for those who have taken amoxicillin in the previous 30 days; or poor response to 10-day course of amoxicillin:			
Children			
- Amoxicillin/clavulanic acid oral, 15–25 mg/kg/dose of amoxicillin component, 8 hourly <u>45 mg/kg/dose of amoxicillin component, 12 hourly (amoxicillin/clavulanic acid in a ratio of 14:1)</u> for 5-10 days. - Maximum dose of amoxicillin component: 1.5 g 12 hourly. (See dosing table: Appendix IV)			
Weight	Dose	Use one of the following	Age

kg	mg (amoxicillin component)	Susp 125/31.5 mg/5 mL	Susp 250/62.5 mg/5 mL	Tablet 500/125 mg/tab	months/years
>3.5–5 kg	75 mg	3 mL	1.5 mL	–	>1–3 months
>5–7 kg	100 mg	4 mL	2 mL	–	>3–6 months
>7–9 kg	150 mg	6 mL	3 mL	–	>6–12 months
>9–11 kg	200 mg	8 mL	4 mL	–	>12–18 months
>11–14 kg	250 mg	10 mL	5 mL	–	>18 months–3 years
>14–17.5 kg	300 mg	12 mL	6 mL	–	>3–5 years
>17.5–25	375 mg	15 mL	7.5 mL	–	>5–7 years
>25–35 kg	500 mg	20 mL	10 mL	1 tablet	>7–11 years